



John Reddoch

337-303-2841

<http://www.reddochmediagroup.com>

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Consumers Want Social Proof Before Making a Purchase	5
Increases Brand Awareness and Positive Online Visibility.....	7
If You Don't Control Your Online Brand, Someone Else Will	8
Online Reputation Management is Cost-Effective	9
Direct Advantage Over Your Competitors	10
Conclusion	12

Introduction

As a small business owner, you're probably trying to do everything possible to bring in more potential customers – as well as repeat customers. However, do you know what's being said about your company online?

If not, you could be in for a huge surprise.

Many businesses today are struggling to bring in more leads, sales, and profits. Generating more business these days can be tough as traditional advertising methods, such as Yellow Pages, Newspaper Ads, TV Ads, etc. , lose their effectiveness.

The internet has opened the doors for everyone in the world to tell others what they think about products, services, and businesses.

So if you are not aware of what's being said about your company online, you're probably setting yourself up for a major downfall; which could end up being a very costly mistake.

Most consumers go online to find local businesses that offer the products and services they need. But when they come across several negative comments, posts, reviews, etc. surrounding a business, they move on to their competitors that have a positive image.

In fact, some studies show that a majority of consumers trust what others consumers say about businesses – whether it's true or not.

Therefore, companies today must do all they can to keep a positive brand image online. If not, their ability to generate more sales could be negatively impacted at serious levels.

In a nutshell, online reputation management can be described as the process used in monitoring a business, brand, products and services. It also includes the process of managing your reputation by generating relevant internet content online about your company.

Online reputation management is similar to public relations; except the evaluation results are used to deal with negativity, implement measures to clear a company's name, and boost a brand's overall image.

The main goal of online reputation management is to reduce - or eliminate - any negativity before it destroys the company's brand and consequently, their business.

Although many local business owners still do not respond at all to comments made about them online, responding positively to a complaint portrays you as caring and responsible.

It shows that you care enough about your customers to publicly apologize for any inconveniences they may have experienced and do whatever you can remedy the situation.

In the eyes of your potential customers, this strongly works in your favor as they try to decide which company to call up or go visit.

Online reputation management also improves your relationships with existing customers and keeps them coming back because they see that you are willing to handle any issues that may arise.

If consumers only see "bad/negative" information about your company on forums, review sites, and social media sites, they will most probably believe in whatever they see.

This could be the source of your business's undoing and an extremely fast rate. Before long, you will start to feel the pain due to a lack of customers coming through your doors.

On the other hand, if your online image is appealing, you should see a steady stream of customers coming in that grows as time goes on.

Online reputation management is a fuel that can rocket your company to success. If you neglect this important process, your business will not run to its maximum capacity in terms of sales and profits.

Here's a closer look at why online reputation management is crucial for your business:

Reason #1:

Consumers Want Social Proof Before Making a Purchase

You can think of social media and the internet at large as the new age 'word of mouth' - except it is digital.

We live in an era where people will believe just about anything they read online. Social media and online review sites are the stomping grounds for consumers to tell the world about how they feel about companies they do business with.

Not only that, but it is also the first place people go to find out what others have to say about companies they are considering doing business with.

The internet world is like the dry grassland; once a spark of information touches it, it spreads like wild fire. So you should not waste any time to start dealing with your online reputation.

It is always easier to fix small problems immediately, instead of waiting for them to become so large that everything comes crumbling down before your eyes; making it nearly impossible for you to attract new customers.

Therefore, it is in your best interest to ensure that what they are reading about you is mostly positive – and not filled with a bunch of negativity.

It is evident now that people will first search for local businesses online before they decide to contact or visit them. But the immediate next step usually involves checking to see what "others" are saying about these companies.

Many consumers have stated that checking online reviews is the first step they take before they purchase products and services.

We all are looking for affirmation online. No one wants to buy something from a business that other people seem to have problems with or serious doubts about.

Even offline, we always ask our friends and family for referrals on products and services. In fact, you've probably eaten at a particular restaurant one too many times; and a friend probably recommended it to you.

Social proof is a way for consumers to make informed decisions. They sincerely feel like the experiences that other consumers have with a company will be their experience as well.

So, obviously, if they see too much negativity surrounding your business, they will likely avoid you.

Think about yourself and your own local business search habits... How do you feel when you come across negative reviews about local restaurants, hotels, etc? You probably avoid them too.

Can you see how this can HURT your bottom line?

It is important that you understand the power of online reviews. The more reviews your business has, the better. There are many ways you can get more reviews, but the most simple and effective way is by asking your loyal customers to go online and leave reviews for you.

If people have shopped at your store, used your services or eaten at your restaurant and ended up happy and satisfied, most will not mind going online to post their thoughts – but you just need to ask them.

Once you have a nice number of good reviews online, you will not have as hard of time trying to get new customers as you would with a lot of negative reviews.

However, don't expect to have ALL good reviews. It's important to have "honest" reviews, so if there a couple of mildly negatives ones in the mix, it's a good thing because it looks more natural to consumers.

There is no perfect business. So if yours has all perfect comments, it could raise some doubts and questions with potential customers.

Reason #2: Increases Brand Awareness and Positive Online Visibility

One of the main reasons some businesses are more successful than others is brand awareness. When you have a recognizable brand, people will want to be associated with it, especially if the brand strives to provide quality products and services they enjoy.

Creating brand awareness has a lot to do with online reputation management. This is because the more positive your business looks online, the better your brand will do in terms of visibility and marketing.

With a successful online reputation management campaign, it is possible to push any negativity surrounding your business down in the search engine results by consistently publishing fresh, new content on a consistent basis.

Over time, this will turn a negative online presence into a positive one, which will send you more qualified traffic that will more easily convert into sales.

Statistics show that there are thousands of searches all geared towards local businesses every second. This means that there are more and more consumers searching for local products and services using the internet.

But when people are searching for local businesses, there is much more to the search than just the products and services; whether they choose you or not also has a lot to do with brand recognition and your reputation.

Since this is the case, you have no option but to pay special attention to building your brand in a positive light if you want to get some of those new customers.

Brand recognition is powerful because people feel more comfortable with brands they can trust; the products and services they offer come after that.

When a brand becomes a positive household name, people will buy the products or services without even thinking about quality or other factors. It is only through having positive reviews and a well-planned reputation management strategy that your brand will be received positively by the online local community.

With the high amount of local searches in mind, you should make sure that the people searching for your business do not end up coming across a lot of negative information that will prove damaging to your business and its operations.

Reason #3:

If You Don't Control Your Online Brand, Someone Else Will

Social media has control over almost every aspect of our daily online lives. With the numbers of social media users increasing every single second, it is important to understand that most of your customers are using social media.

They socialize with other people and share whatever they think is useful including information on businesses, products and services.

In their daily social media usage, consumers share experiences with companies and related matters. They will read various reviews, as well as leave comments. It would be very unfortunate for your business if a lot of your customers are discussing negative experiences they've had with you.

Even worse, it could be more detrimental if you don't know anything about it – or just not doing anything about it. This is the type of damage that can be controlled using online reputation management strategies before it negatively impacts your sales and eats up your profit.

The internet is overflowing with information; however, due to strategies such as search engine optimization, consumers are able to drill down and find exactly the information they are looking for. So if you think these negative comments about your company are completely harmless, you may want to think again.

When too many bad things are being said online about your business, this negatively light can easily find its way up to the top of the search engine result pages - and this is not good for business.

Amidst all of the sharing of information, there are also other factors that can damage your business's reputation and cause great harm to your ability to grow.

Some competitors are cunning and unethical to a point of posting negative stories and reviews about other companies - all in efforts of gaining an unfair advantage.

Some of these corrupt competitors may post allegations geared towards damaging your company name. Even though the information may be totally false, it can still harm your business's reputation and cause some major damage that is not easy to fix if you cast a blind eye on these allegations.

The results could end up being a gradual loss of existing customers and a strained ability to attract new customers.

If you have not yet paid any attention to your online reputation, it is never too late to start. Negative publicity is harmful to just about anything, so do all you can to correct these situations before they get completely out of hand.

Reason #4:

Online Reputation Management is Cost-Effective

They say prevention is better than cure, and in the case of online reputation, this statement cannot be further from the truth. There are many advantages to actively managing your online reputation, instead of sitting around waiting for a murky situation to arise.

Many local business owners have heard about online reputation management but most of them do not think it's important for their small businesses; this is totally wrong.

Today, ignoring the online community is like ignoring your need for new and repeat customers.

So it is time to set up strategies that will assist you in managing your reputation every single day, which will minimize the expenses you could incur down the road by trying to deal with bad situations.

It only takes a little effort and time to monitor and manage your reputation so you are totally aware of how your business looks in the eyes of local consumers.

There will be small expenses for the management of your brand online, but the amount you pay can never be compared to the amount you will lose once your reputation has been destroyed.

There is much more to a business than just profits; as a business owner, it is possible that you have invested your life's savings into your business. So if something goes terribly wrong with your reputation, you can expect to experience a lot of financial pain and stress.

However, you can avoid this by implementing a solid online reputation management process. A bad reputation is a source of customer loss; and consequently loss of sales.

If you think there is a problem with your online reputation, you should address it as soon as possible before your business falls to its knees and experiences some serious financial turmoil. This is usually what happens when local consumers start to avoid a business due to a vast amount of online negativity.

The tools and strategies involved to build a positive reputation online are more cost effective than any form of traditional advertising. Not only that, but as you can see, the money spent is well-worth it.

Reason #5: **Direct Advantage Over Your Competitors**

In simple words, having a negative reputation is like giving away business to your local competitors.

Let's face it; regardless of how good your products and services are, if too many negative things are said about you online, no one will want to be associated with your business or its operations – let alone, purchase anything from you.

In fact, the chance that a potential customer will choose you drops considerably if your online reputation is scarred. Since there are likely other companies in the area that provide the same products and services that you provide, consumers will likely choose one of your direct competitors over you.

Is this a chance you can afford to take?

No; and the only way to avoid it is by being proactive and preventing situations such as this from happening.

Local consumers purchase from your competitors - not because they have better services - but it could be simply because you have neglected your online reputation.

Not only that, but without branding and an online image, it would be a struggle for consumers to find you online.

Instead, when they go online to find products and services such as yours, they will choose those competitors who are taking measures to have ultimate online visibility.

As a business owner, you will have to live with all the repercussions of a negative reputation for many years to come.

While you are going through all of this, your competitors who have a stronger reputation will be making money from your potential customers; some who may not even come your way after you sort out your issues depending on how serious the issues are.

The best thing to do is to have an upper hand on your competitors when it comes to online reputation management. Make sure you deal with reputation issues as soon as any negative comments show up.

Do not ignore complaints or respond in anger. Keep in mind that as much as people are looking at the complaint, they are also looking at how you will handle the situation. So you should always handle each situation carefully and make sure the complainant is satisfied.

With your online reputation intact, you will have to worry less about your competition taking over your share of the market. In fact, as everything else about your business is top-quality, you can rank highly as "the company of choice" in the eyes of consumers when they are looking online for the types of products and services you offer.

Conclusion

Successful online reputation management is about much more than just dealing with negativity; it is also about collecting positive reviews to enhance your credibility online as well as building a brand that will become a trusted household name.

If you have already searched, but not found a lot of online negativity surrounding your business, then it's a great time to add online reputation management as an integral part of your marketing plan. In order to maintain your clean company image, you need a proactive strategy in place to eliminate the impact of potential online attacks on your business.

On the flip side, if you are already suffering due to an overall negative online image, you have to do something as soon as possible. Otherwise, you're leaving your chance of success on the line – sending your potential customers right into the arms of your competition.

Once the damage is done, it can be pretty tough to repair – but it can be done with the right tools and strategies in place. Further damage could be detrimental to your business, so take control of your online reputation by implementing a solid plan of action right away.

As a busy business owner, you probably don't have the time or desire to take on this critical marketing step on your own. Due to the components involved, it can be overwhelming.

I help local businesses in the area monitor, manage, and take control their online reputations. Contact me at 337-303-2841 if you would like a free, no-obligation consultation about the current state your company's online image.

John W. Reddoch

337-303-2841

john@reddochmediagroup.com

www.reddochmediagroup.com

